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AUTHOR Odebunmi, Akin
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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, various forms of polygamy and monogamy are practiced; however, monogamy is more or less practiced by many Christians and a greater percentage of younger men. A survey of marital success and failure was conducted with samples of Nigerian Diploma students and selected educated community members. Subjects completed two instruments, the Marital Checkup consisting of 35 questions about topics such as companionship, communication, and the myth of the perfect marriage, and the Ireton Personal Inventory. Results indicated that a great percentage of married people were not happy with their marriages, and cited financial problems, personality traits, and sexual maladjustment and promiscuity as causes of marital failure and divorce. The findings suggest that greater emphasis on education and knowledge in matters of sex, marriage, and parenthood is needed. (The Marital Checkup is included in the appendix.)

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A SURVEY OF MARITAL SUCCESS AND FAILURE
AMONG SAMPLED EDUCATED NIGERIANS

Akin Odebunmi, PhD.
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Benin
Benin City, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

This research is interested in a survey of marital success and failure among sampled educated Nigerians. The couples referred to in this survey are therefore not the traditional couples who are bluntly against the modern definition of co-existence for husband and wife.

It is not the intension of the researcher therefore to make any claims on what marriage should be, be it traditional or modern type with the believe in co-existence.

In Nigeria as it is well known by those who are familar with the country's social values polygamy and monogamy are practiced.

Among the moslems and traditional religionists in Nigeria; polygamy is more or less mandatory. It was and still is considered a symbol of the social and economic success in various quarters where it is practiced. Older christians also practiced polygamy and it is even on record that many early christians broke away from the missions to establish their own churches when the missionaries insisted on one man one wife.

Monogamy in Nigeria today, is more or less practiced by many Christians and a greater percentage of younger men. Actually the trend toward monogamy is a modern one in our society. Uka (1966) claimed that this significant social change is brought about by:

- 1) the impact of western civilization on the social outlook of Nigerians;
- 2) the influence of Christianity, which requires its adherents to observe the principle of one man, one wife. Usually, infringement of this injunction leads to deprivation of status and privileges in the church;
- 3) economic reasons, arising from the fact that marrying too many wives at the same time is becoming an insurmountable burden on a man's social and economic resources, although there are as yet no birth control measures to regulate family size;
- 4) the social emancipation of women, through greater opportunities for education. This has given them a greater degree of economic independence and social equality;
- 5) the outstanding progress which has been made in medical science in recent times. This has greatly reduced the high incidence of infant mortality. This means that more babies have a better chance of survival nowadays than was the case a few years ago. Thus a person can stick to one wife and still beget as many children as he would desire.

- (6) formerly, a man required the services of a large number of wives on the farm. nowadays, with industrialization, a money economy, the application of science to agriculture, the use of the professional class and paid employment, that need has been greatly reduced.
- (7) the rising cost of living and the increase in taste and fashion in modern times, which tend to discourage recourse to polygamy.

Other new developments tend to promote the idea of one man one wife in the country. A greater percentage of Nigerians who studied abroad or who were taught by people from the Western culture where the idea of one man one wife seem to predominate, are influenced either through enculturation or acculturation to marry only one wife. Some other Nigerians who were reared in polygamous houses swore not to put their children through what they experienced. At a time in the history of this country children were to be seen not heard. Currently, it seems every Nigerian strives to provide the best atmosphere for the children in order that their growth and development could be smooth. The glory nowadays as compared to previous years is on the success of the children rather than the number of children. so quality or calibre rather than quantity is now the order of the day.

Other kinds of marriages apart from the known polygamy and monogamy which exist in Nigeria are:

1. Uka, Ngwoba "Growing up in Nigerian culture" A Pioneer Study of Physical and Behavioural Growth and Development of Nigerian Children. Ibadan University Press 1966.

Progressive polygamy - in which people divorce and re-marry as many times as they can fit.

Levirate marriage - in which a man, on the death of his father or elder brother, takes over the man's widow or widows and assume responsibility over such wives and their children. If the individual is taking over the wives of his father as is the common practice in the families of Chiefs, Obas, and Kings and in many tribes in the country, the individual's mother is excluded.

Sororate marriage - in which a man on the death of his wife marries the sister-in-law. This is popularly known as Sororate polygamy.

It should be borne in mind that although the listed different forms of marriages can still be found in Nigeria, they are not universally recognized.

Universally recognized marriages in Nigeria are contracted under the native law and custom, contracted under religious ceremonies and some are contracted under the marriage ordinance through what is known as Court marriage or Church marriage.

Family Setting

1. Studies of family 'types' (the emotional climate of the family) show that two independent dimensions emerge
 - (a) families vary from "loving" to "hostile" (Other studies have labelled this dimension "warm" to "cool")
 - (b) Families vary from "controlling" to "permissive" (also labelled "restrictive" to "autonomous").

2. The interactions of these dimensions have been studied, with the following results:

- (a) Hostile-permissive families tend to breed angry children who have not learned to control their aggression; such children are often impulsive, antisocial, and possibly delinquent.
- (b) Hostile-controlling families tend also to breed angry children who, however, are inhibited and unable to recognize their hostility; such children may be accident-prone and "neurotic".
- (c) Warm-permissive families (the stereo typical "perfect" family) usually produce active, outgoing, and independent children who may be difficult to deal with when younger; they are likely to show aggression but tend not to have chronic or rageful anger.
- (d) Warm-restrictive families may produce conforming, submissive, and non competitive children.

Selective factors responsible for marriage or choice of husband and wife in Nigeria are family friendship, wealth, industriousness good profession or ability to maintain self and wife, social standing, religion, bribal affiliation and good health. Until very recently love was not selected as among the factors responsible for marriage. In the past marriages have been contracted by either the family of the bridegroom or the bride without any consideration for the feeling of the husband or the wife. Even when love is a factor

many engagements or marriage promises have been broken by the extended family for one reason or the other. Some tribes even forbid members of their clan to marry from either outside the clan or from certain other clans which are known to have been unfriendly with their clan in the past.

While some tribes in Nigeria pay and receive what is popularly known as bride wealth in order to legalise marriage contract other tribes frown at such practices.

What is the Nature of Love

"Love is the passionate and abiding desire on the part of two or more people to produce together the conditions under which each can be and spontaneously express his real self; to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish (that is) far superior to what either could achieve alone".²

Like "life" in general, love embodies what appears to be a contradiction: the satisfaction of the self through the satisfaction of the needs and desires of others"

2. Magoun, Alexander F. "Love and Marriage, Harper and Row, New York, 1948 p. 4.

Far from being selfless, love provides a double satisfaction - even a triple satisfaction - to the self: once to the self because you can love and are loving; once to the self when love is reciprocated and you are loved; and once to the self because you know that, since you are loving and being loved, you must have a lovable self. When it is all there, you are well and truly "locked in" Nobody wants out.³

The ability to love is the capacity to escape the self-containment of one's own ego and seek instead to nourish another. A person with this ability well developed is able to give love freely to someone else. In its best example it is like a floodlight. The more energy put into it, the more people it can light or warm. In turn, more light and warmth shed back on the giver, and it is characteristic of those with this ability to be as able to receive as to give. In their general relation to the world, they are giving, outgoing, friendly people, flure who reach out automatically to the world around them.⁴

3. Bohannon, Paul Love, Sex and Being Human, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1969, p. 85.

4. Trainer, Joseph Physiologic Foundations of Marriage Counselling, C.V. Mosby, St. Louis, 1965, p. 10.

Nature has so made men and women that they are not complete in themselves. They yearn for a mate of the opposite sex and for the fulfillment that such a union can bring. Most people in Nigeria marry after a period of courtship - this is different from previous practice. After marriage family and home is established.

The family and the home are basic institutions of human society. The family serves two purposes;

Biological - providing for the propagation of the race.

Social - providing for the development of man by meeting the need for companionship with a partner of the opposite sex and cultivating love, concern sympathy and mutual care.

M E T H O D O L O G Y

Two instruments were used to survey marital success and failure among sampled Nigerians. The first one is the "marital check up"⁵ by Sally Wendkos Olds. In this instrument individuals were allowed to respond to the thirty five statements if it was true to their marriage or not. The questions included those on marriage myths,

5. Marital Check up is Excerpted from How Healthy Is Your Marriage? by Sally Wendkos Olds, Ladies' Home Journal, January 1978

Questions of companionship, communication, commitment, sexuality, mutual respect and self-esteem. In the scoring the areas which seem to be culturally irrelevant to the Nigerian common practice were not analyzed, but just casually mentioned.

Another instrument used was the Ireton's Personal Inventory, especially the questions pertaining to anxiety about living, marital situations, sexual life, sensitivity, dominance and emotional aspects of personality.

The men and women who participated in this survey were Diploma students in the National Diploma programme in Nursing Administration and Management, Health Administration and Management at the University of Benin and selected members of the public in Benin City.

The score was recorded in relation to the following

- (i) those who thought of the perfect marriage, if it was realistic?
Are they repressing normal conflicts? Are they ignoring the seeds of future trouble?
- (ii) On companionship, are they compassionate to one another?
Are they over doing the companionate side of marriage?
- (iii) On commitment. Is there a sense of commitment to the marriage?
Is there no sense of commitment?
- (iv) The self esteem was also measured - Is there regard for self in the marriage?

Is the individual undervaluing himself or herself?
Is the individual undervaluing his or her contribution to the marriage.

TABLE I

THE MARITAL CHECK UP

	RESPONDENTS			
	MALE (124%)		FEMALE (196%)	
	L	5	5+	
1. The Perfect Marriage	116	8	170	24
Questions 2,7,10,24,27,28,30	94%	6%	88%	12%
(Scope). Expectations of marriage				
(5+) Are they realistic?				
Are you repressing normal				
conflicts.				
Are you ignoring the seeds of				
Future trouble?				
TABLE II				
2. The companionship	48	76	68	128
Questions: 1, 6, 11, 13, 17, 27,	39%	61%	35%	65%
28.				
(5) Overdoing the companionate				
side of marriage (i.e. if Yes is				
5 or greater)				
Communication				
Questions 2, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19,				
21, 22, 23, 29, 33, 35.				
TABLE III				
3. The commitment	80	44	80	116
Questions: 3,14,18 and 34	65%	35%	41%	59%
(Scope) No sense of commitment				
to partner (if answered yes to				
3, 14 or 18 and No. 34 or leave				
34 unanswered) <u>1st figure</u>				
of each group				

TABLE IV

	RESPONDENTS			
	MALE (124)		FEMALE (196%)	
	- 5	5+	-5	5+
4. Self-Esteem	28	96	40	156
Questions 5, 9, 19, 20, 22,	23%	66%	20%	80%
27, 28 - undervaluing your-				
self and your contributions				
to the marriage (if answered				
Yes to __ 5 questions)				

RESULT ANALYSIS

Table I: Questions 2, 7, 10, 24, 27, 28 and 30 in the marital quiz were questions dealing with the Perfect Marriage. Of the 124 men who responded 116 of them did not hold on to the myth of perfect marriage while 8 of the respondents held to the idea of the perfect marriage. When this is compared to the responses of the women it was realized that 172 women out of 196 were not in support of the Perfect marriage myth, while 24 of them held on to the idea of the perfect marriage. While 6% of the men held on to the idea of the myth about perfect marriage. 12% of the women held on to this myth.

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Men $\angle 5$ Yes 5 + Yes

116 = 94% 8 = 6%

$\angle 5$ Yes 5+ Yes

Women 172 = 88% 24 = 12%

Table II The result on Table II was an interesting one in that as much as 61% and 65% men and women respectively.

Companionship No Companionship

Men $\angle 5$ Yes 5+ Yes

48 = 39% 76 = 61%

Women $\angle 5$ Yes 5 + Yes

68 = 35% 128 = 65%.

Table III. The result on commitment was also an interesting finding. The question 3, 14, 18 and 34 if answered yes were scored as having no sense of commitment to the marriage.

Men Sense of commitment

80 = 65%

No sense of commitment

44 = 35%

Women 80 = 41%

116 = 59%

TABLE IV: The result on self-esteem was very fascinating.

while 23% of men undervalued their contribution to the marriage 20% of the women undervalued their contribution to the marriage.

	High Self-esteem	Low Self esteem
Men	96 = 77%	28 = 23%
Women	156 = 80%	40 = 20%

The results in Tables 1 - IV portray the fact that most of the people sampled are less ready to make their marriages work. It seems as if marriage as an institution is taken for granted as a necessary evil more or less. Another way to look at the sampled group is to consider marriage in the traditional way of child-bearing and propagation of the culture through children.

The result also demonstrate that a greater percentage of married people might be going through a lot of stress as a result of their inability to benefit from happy marriages.

Without any attempt to condemn the culture or the Nigerian tradition the observation of the researcher is also focused on the contributory factor to unhappy marriages. Although the aspect of communication is not stressed, the findings showed that most people did not perform well in that aspect.

Questions which tested for communication ability in the marital quiz are: 2, 7, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29, 33 and 35.

DISCUSSION

What does one person give to another? How can two people live together harmoniously through sharing?

An attempt by any individual to answer the above questions is an attempt to re-evaluate one's ability to love and be loved. An individual can give of himself, of the most previous he has. This does not necessarily mean that he/she sacrifices his/her life for the other - but that the individual gives that which is alive in him or her. He gives his/her joy, he gives of his/her interest and of his/her understanding, of his/her humor, of his/her sadness, of all his/her expressions and manifestations.

Through personal interviews with some of those sampled it was discovered that many people tend to be too unfair on their spouse. The feeling of I am OK, he or she is not OK predominates. People tend to disregard the fact that individuals brought up differently will definitely hold on to different values. It seems rather selfish for individuals to make attempts to change their spouses personality to suit themselves. It also seem rather funny to expect perfection from one's spouse when no individual possess that quality.

Causes of marriage failures and divorces can be enumerated as follows:

- 1) Sexual maladjustment causes some marriages to end in disaster. People who are matrimonial incompetents or are mismated can seldom find the happiness they expected in marriage.

Incompatibility rests on personality conflicts and other psychosocial causes. Some boys have mother fixation while some girls have father fixation.

- 2) Promiscuity:

- 3) Temperamental differences, as well as disparity in Education, ability and general cultural background may lead to friction and antagonisms that endanger the strengthening of love.

Mannerisms, personal habits and certain traits of character may irritate one's mate. Other things being equal the more common the interests and sympathies and the wider the range of elements in the common cultural background of the two persons, the greater the likelihood of happy marriage.

- 4) Financial or economic problems and differences is another source of friction. Poverty and inability to save money may be source of strain. Period of unemployment. Extravagance and selfishness in the spending of money may lead to quarrells.
- 5) Disordered or psychopathic personality traits, lack of personal freedom, trouble over children and friction concerning relatives

Recommendations for Improvement of Marriage

1. **Emphasis** on education and knowledge in matters of sex, marriage, and parenthood is needed. Many of the broken marriages go to pieces due to sheer ignorance. It is recommended that this knowledge should be supplied through the schools, religious Institutions, and parents.
2. For would-be married couples, medical and marriage counselling help should be provided before granted permission to marry. Government hospitals and Religious Institutions should be of great help with medical and marriage counselling respectively. Would-be couples who are living in areas where they could receive psychological help are even urged to seek such help and check on their compatibility/incompatibility before they get themselves wrapped up in a life time adventure.
3. Since Nigeria has transformed from a simple Farming Society to an Industrialized one the traditional set up has been altered. It would be unrealistic for any one to continue to think of marriage in its traditional set up. Individuals should be allowed to determine and choose whom they intend to spend the entire life with.
4. Wide comradeship between boys and girls should be encouraged. Greater opportunity, under wholesome conditions, for the acquaintance of young people of approximately the same ages and cultural backgrounds needs to be provided.

5. Society should give greater attention to marriages.

Assuring the former method of marriage settlement by traditional rulers is no longer in practice, the elders within the families concerned should endeavour to assist and provide counselling to the young ones when they tend to stray.

Problems needing greater attention.

The population problem or 'population explosion'

Before 1830 World Population less than a billion

By 1930 2 billion

" 1965 3 billion

" 1980 4 billion U. N. Statistics

" 1990 5 billion U. N. prediction.

In some parts of the world, the population is doubling every 20 years - such explosion deprive these people the advantage of gains from technological . . . Capital investment. This explosion is leading to an increase in human misery with the possibility of tragic consequences.

$\frac{2}{3}$ of the world's population according to UN statistics is under fed. In 1964 84 countries of the world had a per Capital of less than \$150.00 a year. Thus many people are deprived of the conditions which enable them to live lives worthy of human beings. Children have a right to be well born, wanted, and reared under conditions that make a happy and mature life possible. Parents should be aware of the facts that children needs to be spaced and given better care in order to eliminate much poverty and misery.

Appendix I

MARITAL CHECKUP: A QUIZ FOR COUPLES
TO TAKE TOGETHER

Just as a medical checkup shows the condition of our body, sometimes we need a marriage checkup to determine the condition of our relationship. To take this quiz, each partner should number from 1 to 35 on a separate piece of paper. Check only those questions that apply to your feelings or behaviour, or fill in the blanks where indicated. After you have both completed the answers, read the analysis of your replies.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. When my spouse and I are separated for a few days, I miss him/her terribly, but when we're together again I wonder why I felt so very lonely during the time we were apart. | 10. My spouse and I have no secrets from each other -- we tell each other everything. |
| 2. I have never told my spouse a lie | 11. I don't like most of my spouse's friends, but because I love him/her, I force myself to go out with them socially. |
| 3. I often wonder whether I would have been happier married to someone else. | 12. When I see that my spouse is upset, I give him/her advice that I think helps him/her solve those problems. |
| 4. It hurts me when I see other people take advantage of my spouse. | 13. Three activities that I like to do with my spouse are _____ and _____ |
| 5. My spouse is a better parent than I am. | 14. I can't imagine what living with my spouse ten years from now will be like. |
| 6. When my spouse and I go out to a restaurant alone, we seem to find it hard to find things to talk about | 15. I need to protect my children from my spouse's unfair treatment of them. |
| 7. My spouse and I never fight. | |
| 8. I don't like to burden my spouse with my personal troubles, so when I have problems at work or with other people, I make sure that I keep them to myself. | |
| 9. I feel lucky that my spouse chose me, since he/she is more desirable than I am. | |

Appendix I contd.

16. It takes the romance out of our sexual relationship if I tell my partner what I like during love-making.
17. I feel a husband and wife should never spend a night away from each other if they can possibly help it.
18. Whenever we have a bad fight, I think that we might break up.
19. Since it's embarrassing to admit to my partner when I've made a stupid mistake, I usually avoid talking about my errors.
20. I often have the feeling that my spouse's job or the children are more important to him/her than I am.
21. Our fights usually start over something small (like the eggs being overcooked or one of us being late), but then they have a tendency to escalate until our really deep angers with each other come out.
22. If my spouse knew my secret fears, he/she would think less of me, so I try to keep them to myself.
23. The three things that worry my partner the most are _____ and _____
The three things that worry me the most are _____ and _____
24. I have never once questioned my wisdom in choosing my spouse.
25. I think sex is vastly overrated
26. I know what my spouse is going to say about most topics so well that I could almost finish his/her sentences myself.
27. I don't like it when I have to go to a party without my spouse.
28. I would rather be with my spouse doing nothing than be involved in an interesting activity without him/her.
29. Because I think a little mystery keeps a relationship exciting, there are certain feelings and
30. Our sexual relationship is so exciting that I have never fantasized about making love with anyone else.
31. Once the vows of fidelity have been broken, no matter what, the marriage is irreparably damaged.
32. My partner and I have worked out our own separate jobs in running our marriage, and it works out best when we each stay in our own sphere and away from each other's.
33. I don't like to hurt my partner's feelings, so I usually don't say anything when he/she does little things that annoy me.

34. I look forward to the next stage in our marriage - when we will have children are all in school, or when they are grown and out of the house.
35. We hardly ever fight, but when we do, it often takes us days to overcome the bitterness between us.

For scoring of this marital Quiz Contact

- (i) Dr. Akin Odebunmi
Dept of Ed. Psychology
University of Benin
Benin-City, Nigeria.
- (ii) Dr. J. O. Akinboye
Dept. of Guidance and Counselling
University of Ibadan,
Ibadan, Nigeria.

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